A. M. KLEIMOLA

The Duty to Denounce in Muscovite Russia

Sometime between 1533 and 1536, a certain Ivan Iaganov, writing from prison, addressed a petition to the child ruler Ivan IV in which he suggested that his release would be in the interests of state security.[1] Iaganov apparently had enjoyed a successful career as a political informer under Ivan's father, and after the death of Vasilii III had continued to serve his new sovereign in the same manner. On his last mission, he explained, he had reported to Ivan's boyars as ordered, informing them of the "dangerous talk" he had overheard: "At that time, Sire, I could not plug my ears with pitch; what I heard, Sire, I reported, in the way in which I served and reported to thy father." As a result, Iaganov now found himself in fetters, tortured "in the manner of evil traitors and brigands," and deprived of food and drink. "And, Sire, I am to be held guilty because I serve thee, the sovereign, and [because] I wish good for thy land." Was this to be his reward for carrying out his civic duty in denouncing Vasilii's brother Prince Iurii Ivanovich? Such had certainly not been the case in the past: "Prior to this, Sire, did I serve thy father Grand Prince Vasilii; whatever evil and good I heard, I told the sovereign, and whatever great, terrible, death-bearing deeds Prince Iurii Ivanovich's petty nobles in my presence ordered [done] to thy father, Sire, I reported all those deeds to the sovereign, and thy father agreed to bestow his favor on me for that." Far from being chained and tortured, Iaganov said, he had been ordered by the grand prince "to pursue his interests everywhere." In fact, he knew of other men who had suffered in the past for their failure to report such dangerous talk. Iaganov requested that the sovereign conduct an inquest concerning his imprisonment, and at the same time warned of future dangers to the realm, which would arise if loyal citizens were mistreated in this fashion. If he were punished for telling the grand prince about matters detrimental to his interests, others would be afraid to do so subsequently, and "henceforth he who hears any matter concerning thee, [be it] evil or good, will be unable to report it." In his petition, Iaganov was obviously suggesting that the political

1. *Akty istoricheskie*, 5 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1841–42), vol. 1, no. 136.

The author wishes to acknowledge the support of the Center for Advanced Study, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

security of the state depended on the faithful service of such people as himself.

Viewed as an isolated instance, this petition could be explained purely in terms of self-interest. Iaganov, himself wishing to be released from prison, was appealing to the authorities on the same basis, stressing his own past services to the state and pointing out that the grand prince was endangering his future security by actions which would discourage loyal subjects from reporting whatever they heard, "for good or for evil," to the sovereign and his boyars. This document could simply reflect the well-calculated pragmatism of a professional informer fallen from grace. On the other hand, Muscovite sources from both earlier and later periods indicate that Iaganov's appeal, while undoubtedly based on self-interest, also rested upon a concept of the loyal subject's responsibility which the grand princes of Moscow had long encouraged. "For is that man worthy, Sire," Iaganov had asked, "who has heard but will not tell?" By the sixteenth century such a question had become totally rhetorical. Surviving interprincely agreements (*dogovornye gramoty*) from the mid-fourteenth century on included promises to report any matters "for good or for evil." The obligation was expressed more comprehensively during later centuries, appearing with great regularity in the political loyalty oaths exacted from members of the upper social classes. By the middle of the seventeenth century the duty to report such matters had become universal—every subject of the Muscovite tsar was bound in law to do so.

Written obligations to share or pass on information are found earliest in documents relating to the highest level of society, in the agreements or contracts concluded by the princes among themselves.[2] Such treaties might mark the end of hostilities between the princes involved or an attempt to resolve differences without armed conflict. In some cases, such as the agreement between Vasilii III and his brother Iurii, the aim was to forestall anticipated problems—Vasilii wanted to protect the position of his newborn son.

Originally, it would appear, only one document was written in the name of both parties, stating their mutual obligations.[3] Subsequently the agreements were drawn up in a different way, perhaps to make it easier for princes to conclude them without the need to come together in person. Each prince composed a separate document which included the conditions the opposite side was to accept. He then forwarded the original to the man swearing the oath and retained a copy for himself. Thus each party had two documents, which taken together formed the whole of the agreement.[4]

2. For the texts of the surviving treaties see *Dukhovnye i dogovornye gramoty velikikh i udel'nykh kniazei XIV–XVI vv.*, ed. L. V. Cherepnin and S. V. Bakhrushin (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950); hereafter cited as *DDG*.

3. See, for example, *DDG*, nos. 2, 5, 7, 11, 14, 18.

4. See, for example, ibid., nos. 24, 30, 35, 36, 38, 45.

The earliest surviving princely agreement that refers to the specific obligation to share information is one concluded in 1367 between Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich of Moscow and his cousin Vladimir Andreevich, prince of Serpukhov and Borovsk. Each gave the following promise: "And whatever thou shalt hear about me, whether from a Christian (i.e., Russian) or from a non-Christian (i.e., foreigner), concerning my good or evil, or about our patrimony, or about all Christians, thou shalt tell me that in truth, without deception, in accordance with [this oath sworn upon] kissing the cross. And I shall likewise tell thee." It has been suggested that this clause was added as a supplement to the more general statement of the two parties to have common "friends" and "enemies."[5] The introduction of this condition is understandable in terms of the prevailing political situation, since the agreement was concluded in the years of strife between Moscow and Tver, when the prince of Tver was seeking both Lithuanian and Tatar support.[6] At any rate, the clause must have been considered extremely useful, since it was incorporated with great regularity thereafter.

In several princely agreements the promise was reciprocal, each side swearing to inform the other of any matters concerning him "for good or for evil."[7] In many more of the documents, however, the duty to inform was a one-sided obligation, reflecting the growing power of the ruler of Moscow in opposition to that of the other princes. In such cases the Muscovite grand prince's copy reads, "And whatever thou shalt hear about me for good or for evil . . . ," and the other party's copy reads, "And whatever I shall hear about thee for good or for evil. . . ."[8]

During the fifteenth century another trend developed in the formulation of the treaties, namely, the introduction of additional clauses placing more specific restrictions on the activities of the other Russian princes by subordinating them increasingly to the grand prince of Moscow and defining their obligations more narrowly. The 1483 agreement between Ivan III of Moscow and Ivan Vasilievich, grand prince of Riazan, provides an illustration of the

5. The general clause in question, which appears in the first surviving text of ca. 1350–51 and is reproduced regularly thereafter in the subsequent documents, takes essentially the following form: "A kto budet mne drug, to i tobe drug. A kto budet mne nedrug, to i tobe nedrug." See texts in *DDG*, passim; see also V. I. Sergeevich, *Lektsii i issledovaniia po drevnei istorii russkago prava* (St. Petersburg, 1883), pp. 282–83.

6. See L. V. Cherepnin, *Russkie feodal'nye arkhivy XIV–XV vekov*, 2 vols. (Moscow and Leningrad, 1948–51), 1:34.

7. See *DDG*, nos. 5, 11, 24, 30, 34, 40, 59, 63, 66, 76. These treaties date from 1367 through 1483.

8. Ibid., nos. 9, 10, 13, 15, 19, 33, 35, 36, 37, 38, 45, 47, 52, 56, 58, 69, 70, 72, 73, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 90, 101. These documents date from 1375 through 1531. It should be kept in mind, however, that some of the apparent "one-sidedness" of these documents may be a result of omissions, scribal errors in copying, or abbreviated texts of agreements.

supplementary stipulations. The first clause, regarding exchange of what each hears "for good or for evil," is reciprocal, but the subsequent provisions are not. Ivan III obtained the following promises from Ivan of Riazan: "And if the king and grand prince of Lithuania sends [anyone] to me with anything, I shall tell that to you in truth without guile. And if those enemies of yours, the sons of [the prince of] Mozhaisk, and Shemiachich's sons, and Iaroslavich's son, send [anyone] to me with anything, I shall likewise report that to you in truth, and I shall send to you those who come to me."[9]

Similar conditions, even more expressly defined, were included in the agreement of 1484–85 between Grand Prince Ivan III and the prince of Tver, Mikhail Borisovich. Mikhail was to report anything he heard from anyone at all (*ot kogo by ni bylo*). He was not to have dealings with the king and grand prince of Lithuania and with his sons "to our detriment through any guile," and was to report anything he received from them. He was also not to have any dealings with "our evildoers" (*s nashimi likhodei*), who now included the sons of Prince Ivan of Mozhaisk, the sons of Ivan Shemiachich, the son of Vasilii Iaroslavich, and Prince Vasilii, the son of Prince Mikhail Andreevich,[10] nor was he to receive them in his territory. Furthermore, he was to tell the grand prince "in truth, without guile" about anyone who came to him from the sovereign's enemies, and was to send any such people to the grand prince.[11] Even though he signed the treaty, Mikhail continued secret negotiations with Casimir of Lithuania. After one of his letters had been intercepted by Muscovite agents, Ivan's army marched on Tver in 1485 and Mikhail fled to Lithuania.

Thus Mikhail Borisovich in turn came to be numbered among Ivan's enemies in the treaty which the grand prince concluded in 1486 with his

9. Ibid., no. 76. The enemies mentioned here are the Starodub princes, sons of Ivan Andreevich of Mozhaisk, a prince who had fled to Lithuania in 1454; the grandsons of Dmitrii Shemiaka, whose son had fled to Lithuania; and Ivan Vasilievich, son of Vasilii Iaroslavich of Serpukhov, who had also gone to Lithuania. See A. V. Ekzempliarsky, *Velikie i udel'nye kniaz'ia severnoi rusi v tatarskii period*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1889–91), 2:326–27. See also *DDG*, no. 78, a treaty of 1483 in which the prince of Vereia and Beloozero agreed to notify the grand prince of anyone at all who came to him with any messages, and to send that person to Moscow.

10. Vasilii Mikhailovich, son of Prince Mikhail Andreevich of Vereia, had married the niece of Sophia Paleologus, who gave land to her relative as a dowry. Overjoyed at the birth of his grandson Dmitrii, Ivan III wished to reward his daughter-in-law with the land in question, and at the end of 1483 took back the dowry of Prince Vasilii's wife. Vasilii and his wife fled to Lithuania in 1484. After their flight, because of his son's offense, Prince Mikhail Andreevich of Vereia was deprived of his patrimony, Iaroslavets, Beloozero, and Vereia. Ivan III subsequently returned the land to him "for life," on the basis of a new agreement whereby the land would pass to Ivan at Mikhail's death. Mikhail Andreevich died in 1485. See Ekzempliarsky, *Velikie i udel'nye kniaz'ia*, 1:247–48 and 2:336.

11. *DDG*, no. 79.

brother Boris Vasilievich of Volok. Prince Boris promised not to have any dealings, either by messenger or by document, "in any matters through any guile" with Casimir of Lithuania and his sons, "or whoever shall be king and grand prince in the Lithuanian land," or with Mikhail Borisovich, the fugitive prince of Tver. If they sent anyone to Prince Boris with messages or documents, he was supposed to report the fact, send any such person to the grand prince, and hand over any documents. The same restrictions applied to any dealings with princes, lords, or anyone at all in Lithuania, or any messages or documents from them. Similarly, Prince Boris was to have no dealings "to our detriment" with anyone "in our patrimony, Great Novgorod and Pskov."[12] This document clearly illustrates that the old reciprocity had been eliminated with regard to the sharing of information in matters involving disloyalty, although the form was still preserved. The two documents, one from each side, are written word for word, clause for clause—the only difference is in the total reversal of the pronouns, with the result that all the obligations fall unilaterally on Prince Boris.

The foregoing examples, with their pointed provisions, clearly have to do with particular conditions prevailing at the time the agreements were concluded. But the underlying principle is evident and persistently repeated. By the end of the fifteenth century the obligation of the lesser Russian princes to report all matters touching upon the sovereign's interests had become a standard part of any agreement concluded by the grand prince of Moscow.

How much faith could one have in these promises? What guarantees were there to ensure performance of such obligations? Some of the other clauses in the treaties reveal the means most commonly used: each party kissed the cross, swearing on his oath to live up to his part of the agreement and thus endangering his soul if he "transgressed the cross."[13] Yet it would seem that often the fear of divine judgment merely served to end earthly hostilities temporarily. In Vasilii II's struggle with his uncle Iurii and nephews Dmitrii Shemiaka and Vasilii Kosoy, for example, each party, after concluding an agreement, apparently waited for the first favorable opportunity to violate his word and attack the other side.[14] Ability to ensure performance depended largely on the strength of the enforcer, and increased with the power and authority of the Muscovite grand princes.

From the reign of Ivan III on, explicit statements of the duty to report

12. Ibid., no. 81.

13. See texts in *DDG*, passim. For a discussion of the problem of oaths and their violation in medieval Russian history see H. W. Dewey and A. M. Kleimola, "Promise and Perfidy in Old Russian Cross-Kissing," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 3, no. 2 (Fall 1968): 327–41.

14. See Ekzempliarsky, *Velikie i udel'nye kniaz'ia*, 1:149–80.

all matters affecting the grand prince's interests became more frequent. Specific clauses were transferred literally from the interprincely agreements to the oaths of political loyalty which the Muscovite sovereigns demanded from some of their prominent servitors.[15] The same process occurred which was noted earlier in connection with the fifteenth-century documents: the provisions again became more complex with the passage of time. Requirements grew more comprehensive and detailed.

The various provisions can perhaps be categorized most clearly on the basis of the kinds of activities they covered. The promises ranged from very open-ended blanket agreements to report anything touching upon the sovereign's interests to extremely specific injunctions regarding any dealings at all with certain named enemies of the realm, from leaders of foreign countries to particular subjects of the Muscovite sovereign who were considered suspect. The documents grew long and repetitive, but each variant of the basic formula added a new dimension, covering another situation in which a report was required.

The most general clause among those found in the political loyalty oaths is one that was borrowed directly from the old princely agreements: "And whatever I hear about my sovereign the grand prince for good or for evil, and about his children for good or for evil, I shall report that to my sovereign the grand prince and his children in truth, in accordance with this oath of mine, without guile."[16] Expanded versions of this clause elaborated on those from whom one might hear something: a Christian, or a Tatar, or a Lithuanian, or anyone at all;[17] "from anyone at all, from my brothers, or from my mother, or from thy princes, or from thy boyars, or from thy secretaries, or from my secretaries, or from thy people, or from my people, from anyone at all, or from a Lithuanian, or from any other person, from a foreigner, from anyone at all."[18] The principal promised not to conceal any such information, but to report it to his sovereign without deception.

15. Clauses from the interprincely treaties—though not a promise to report disloyal acts, but merely a vow not to commit them—also appear in the "general service oaths" taken by the servitors of the grand prince. The oldest such oath known to us dates from the first half of the fifteenth century. This document contains the oath taken by an offending servitor who had been pardoned, but S. B. Veselovsky suggests that if we eliminate the suretyship of the metropolitan and bishops, it "gives the formula of the usual oath of a servitor to the grand prince." In his opinion it was an ancient formulation of the obligations of a member of the prince's retinue (*druzhinnik*), repeated according to tradition. See S. B. Veselovsky, *Issledovaniia po istorii oprichniny* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 99–100 (the text of the document is in note 2 on these pages).

16. See *Sobranie gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogovorov,* 5 vols. (Moscow, 1813–94), vol. 1, nos. 103, 145, 146, 163, 167, 168, 169; hereafter cited as *SGGD.*

17. Ibid., no. 145.

18. Ibid., no. 168.

Other oaths used a variant of this formula, covering the situation with somewhat more precision and emphasizing the dangers against which the principal should be on guard: "Or if I come to know about or hear about any enemy of my sovereign, Grand Prince Vasilii, plotting to my sovereign's detriment, or know about or hear anything from anyone at all about my sovereign Grand Prince Vasilii, and his grand princess, and their children, and their lands, for good or for evil: I shall report that to my sovereign, Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich of All Rus', and his children in truth, without any guile, in accordance with this sworn oath."[19] One version of this, an oath given to Vasilii III by Mikhail Pleshcheev in 1532, specifically required him to report anything he learned about "poison and any other evil whatsoever."[20]

Such promises were not limited to information obtained in the grand prince's lands. The scope of the territory covered could be more clearly defined to include, for example, anything heard "in this land or in the patrimonial principalities, or anywhere at all."[21] The oath given in 1547 by Prince Ivan Pronsky provides a good illustration of an expanded version of this clause. He was to report anything he heard "in this land, or in those Lithuanian and Polish and Frankish and German lands, and in the Tatar lands," from anyone living in those areas, namely, "from a Russian, or a Lithuanian, or a Pole, or a Frank, or a German or a Tatar, and from anyone at all."[22] Any indication of disloyalty, whether verbal or in writing, called for a report. A separate clause bound the principals to inform against anyone who spoke to them in any way detrimental to the interests of the grand prince, his wife, his children, or their lands. They promised not to join the sovereign's enemies in any matters, and to report faithfully whatever words were spoken to them.[23] Any documents that the principals received concerning such matters were also to be handed over to the grand prince.[24]

An important aim of the political loyalty oath was to forestall any potentially disloyal acts, especially with regard to offers made by the rulers of Poland and Lithuania. The injunction covered both the transfer of information and physical departure. If anyone were to suggest to the principals that they "send the Polish king a document, or a messenger with a document, or pass on any information, or go to the king in person," the principals were sworn to seize that person and place him before the grand prince and his children, along with any documents the messenger might have.[25] Prince Pronsky's oath of 1547

19. Ibid., no. 149. See also nos. 152, 153, 154, 157, 159, 162, 165, 172, 177, 182, 189.
20. Ibid., no. 162.
21. Ibid., no. 172.
22. Ibid., no. 165.
23. Ibid., nos. 145, 149, 152, 153, 154, 157, 159, 162, 165, 172, 177, 182, 189.
24. Ibid., nos. 152, 153, 154, 157, 159, 165, 172.
25. Ibid., nos. 145, 152, 153, 154, 157, 159, 172. Tatar princes also promised to report

included a much longer list of foreign rulers who apparently were suspected of attempting to carry on intrigues within the Russian state. He was to hand over any messengers who came to him from the king of Poland and his sons, the Hungarian king and his brothers, the pope, the Holy Roman Emperor and his brother, the French king and his sons, the tsars, tsarevichi, and princes in the Crimea, Astrakhan, the Nogai Horde and Kazan, and any other sovereigns, be they Frankish, German, or Tatar.[26] Men bearing verbal or written messages from the sons of foreign rulers, and princes or lords (*pany*) under them, were also to be delivered to the grand prince.[27]

In a few cases, men were specifically required to report on members of their own families. In 1524 Prince Dmitrii Fedorovich Belsky promised that if his brothers Ivan and Semen suggested that he depart to Lithuania, pass on information, or have any dealings with the Lithuanians, or if they started to plot any evil against the grand prince, he would not conceal their activities in any way but would report everything to the sovereign.[28] In the same year his brother Prince Ivan Fedorovich gave the same promise regarding his brothers Dmitrii and Semen.[29] In 1529 Prince Fedor Mikhailovich Mstislavsky agreed to seize and hand over any man who came to him with verbal messages or documents from his father Prince Mikhail. Likewise, he was not himself to send messengers or documents to his father.[30]

---

whatever they heard or received from their brother the tsar, the tsarevichi, or anyone else (ibid., vol. 2, nos. 26 and 27).

26. Ibid., vol. 1, no. 165.

27. Ibid., nos. 145, 152, 154, 157, 159, 165, 172.

28. Ibid., no. 152. Belsky came from a prominent West Russian princely family, and his father had entered Muscovite service from Lithuania in 1482. The pledge may have been required to ensure faithful service, or in connection with the retreat of troops under his command from the Oka in 1521, which enabled the Tatars to reach Moscow and for which he was blamed. In any event, this apparently had no effect on his career, since he became a boyar in 1530. Belsky died in 1551. See A. A. Zimin, "Sostav boiarskoi dumy v XV–XVI vekakh," *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1957 god*, ed. M. N. Tikhomirov (Moscow, 1958), p. 52.

29. *SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 153. Ivan Fedorovich Belsky is mentioned among the boyars in 1534 (Zimin, "Sostav boiarskoi dumy," p. 54). A leading protagonist in the power struggles following the death of Elena Glinskaia, he was killed by the Shuisky faction in 1542. See *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 13, pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1904), p. 141. The principle at work here suggests *krugovaia poruka*—that form of collective suretyship in which the members of a group are made responsible for the performance of duties by the others. Although the term is not used and no surety bonds for the brothers have survived, the net result was the same. For a discussion of the career of Prince Semen Belsky, the third brother, who went over to Lithuania in 1534, see Oswald P. Backus, "Treason as a Concept and Defections from Moscow to Lithuania in the Sixteenth Century," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 15 (1970): 119–44.

30. *SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 157. According to the army register of 1528, Prince Mikhail Ivanovich (Zaslavsky) Mstislavsky had supplied a large contingent of the Lithuanian cavalry. See George Vernadsky, *Russia at the Dawn of the Modern Age* (New Haven

Promises to report any dangerous activity were especially explicit in the oaths exacted from the Staritsky princes, who were themselves suspected of desiring to seize the throne. In 1537 Prince Andrei Ivanovich promised his nephew, the youthful Ivan IV, not to undermine his realm in any way, and to report anyone who encouraged him to undertake such activity. He also agreed not to accept in his territory anyone—whether prince, boyar, secretary, *syn boiarskii*,[31] or anyone at all—who came to him "to the sovereign's detriment," and promised to report any such attempt to the grand prince and his mother. Another clause was directed against potential troublemakers. If anyone attempted to instigate a quarrel between Staritsky and the grand prince, he promised not to listen to him, but also not to conceal the matter. On one level, this was a reciprocal agreement, since if anyone said anything against him to the grand prince, the sovereign was to ask him about the matter—yet at the same time Staritsky repeated his promise not to conceal anything.[32] These clauses were repeated in the oaths sworn by Staritsky's son in 1554, but without any provision for any sort of reciprocity.[33] A special clause in Vladimir Staritsky's oaths of 1553–54 was directed against any intrigue undertaken by his mother, the ambitious Princess Efrosinia. If his mother attempted to lead him into any evil against Tsarevich Ivan, heir of Ivan IV, or the child's mother, he was not to listen to her suggestions but to report her words. Even if Efrosinia did not attempt to involve him, but he knew that she wanted to arrange some evil deed, or was thinking about undertaking some ill-intentioned act against the grand prince's son, or his mother, or his boyars or secretaries, Vladimir was to report such evil plans of his mother and not to conceal them in any way.[34]

In this manner, then, the grand prince's servitors, following in the footsteps of the princes, pledged to report any real or potential dangers to the realm.

and London, 1959), pp. 189–90. His son Fedor had entered Muscovite service only in 1526 (Zimin, "Sostav boiarskoi dumy," p. 55).

31. *Syn boiarskii* (pl. *deti boiarskie*) refers to the lesser gentry in the Muscovite state, who provided the majority of the tsar's military servitors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917*, comp. Sergei G. Pushkarev, ed. George Vernadsky and Ralph T. Fisher, Jr. (New Haven and London, 1970), p. 11. According to Richard Hellie, "The term literally means 'boyar children,' which may mean either that initially they were the sons of boyars, or, more likely, simply the retainers of boyars. By the mid-sixteenth century, at the latest, the term had neither of these meanings, rather signifying simply landholding members (*pomeshchiki*) of the cavalry. In the sixteenth century *deti boiarskie* were recruited from all social milieus, including cossacks, peasants, and even slaves. This avenue of social mobility was closed at the beginning of the seventeenth century as the rank became hereditary." Richard Hellie, ed. and trans., *Readings for Introduction to Russian Civilization* (Chicago, 1967), pp. 217–18.

32. *SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 163.

33. Ibid., nos. 168 and 169.

34. Ibid.

Once again, the system was built on the old foundation of an oath sworn upon kissing the cross, with threats of otherworldly retribution for violation of the promise. In most cases, those who were required to give the special pledges of service first needed to obtain the intercession and support of the metropolitan and other leading church dignitaries. A man who violated his oath was to be deprived of the grace of God, the Mother of God, the holy Russian miracle workers, and the holy fathers of the seven ecumenical councils, as well as the blessing, "in this age or in the future," of the Russian metropolitan, archbishops, bishops, archimandrites, abbots, and the entire consecrated council, through whom he had petitioned the sovereign for pardon of his confessed transgressions against him.[35] By this time, however, other guarantees of a more secular nature had been added. The principal declared that if he failed to live up to his promises or became involved in any matter detrimental to the sovereign's interests, the grand prince and his sons were free to punish him in accordance with his offense.[36]

Performance was further guaranteed by the use of surety bonds, through which other men secured the principal's release on the condition that they would act as guarantors for his good conduct.[37] The surviving bonds are mainly concerned with the question of departure. The sureties pledged that in the event of the principal's flight, or other disloyal acts, they would be held accountable and liable to pay both in money and "with their heads." The documents involving Prince Ivan Fedorovich Mstislavsky, dated 1571, illustrate the extent of the system. After the destruction of Moscow by the Tatars in that year, Ivan IV conducted an investigation of the causes of the Russian army's defeat. Under pressure, Prince Mstislavsky, the senior Zemshchina commander, "confessed" his past crimes against the sovereign, admitting that he had encouraged Khan Devlet-Girei to attack. Through the mediation of the metropolitan and twenty-five other religious dignitaries he petitioned for pardon, promising to uphold the Christian faith and to refrain from any dealings with the sovereign's enemies.[38] The wording of Mstislavsky's declaration indicates that he had been accused of treachery, but apparently there were no grounds for the charge, particularly since he escaped severe punishment.[39]

35. Ibid., nos. 103, 145, 146, 149, 152, 154, 157, 159, 162, 165, 168, 172, 177, 182, 189, 196, 201.

36. Punishment could include confiscation of property and death.

37. *SGGD*, vol. 1, nos. 104, 155, 156, 166, 174, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 181, 184, 185, 186, 190, 191, 194, 195, 197, 198. For an analysis of an early instance of the use of a surety bond to ensure political loyalty (concerning Prince Danilo Kholmsky) see Gustave Alef, "Das Erlöschen des Abzugsrechts der Moskauer Bojaren," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 10 (1965): 38–41.

38. *SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 196.

39. In fact, from 1571 until his downfall in 1584 he was the senior member (*pervoso-*

Three sureties guaranteed Mstislavsky's future good conduct—the boyar N. P. Odoevsky (an *oprichnik*), the boyar M. Ia. Morozov (a resident of the Zemshchina), and the Oprichnina *okol'nichii* A. P. Khovansky.[40] In the event of his misconduct they were obligated to pay 20,000 rubles into the sovereign's treasury.[41] They, in turn, distributed the liability for this huge sum among a group of "subsureties," 285 men from the lesser nobility who were each bound to contribute a share of the total at set rates varying from 25 to 350 rubles.[42] Thus Mstislavsky was surrounded by almost three hundred men who had a personal stake in his continued good behavior. In all probability even more men were keeping an eye on him, since it would seem logical that the sureties would instruct their people to inform them of any suspicious activities on his part.[43] Even then, the tsar had other watchdogs. In addition to the sureties, a boyar's peasants and household servants might be held responsible collectively for his loyalty. It was their duty to listen to his conversations, keep his activities under surveillance, and report anything that seemed out of keeping. This form of collective responsibility was usually not put in writing, but nevertheless it was in operation.[44] Thus the network of men watching each other increased. We might therefore assume that if Mstislavsky failed to report anything concerning the sovereign "for good or for evil," someone else would.

An event that occurred in 1567 suggests that some boyars, whether from a sense of duty or simple self-interest, did report such matters to Ivan IV. In preparation for a renewal of the Livonian war, Sigismund August sent secret messages to the Muscovite boyars, inviting them to desert Russia and come over to Lithuania. Four of the boyars who received such offers—Prince Ivan D. Belsky, Prince Ivan F. Mstislavsky, Prince Mikhail I. Vorotynsky, and Ivan P. Fedorov (Cheliadnin)—immediately notified the tsar, declaring their steadfast loyalty to him. On Ivan's instructions they refused the invitations and sent

vetnik) of the Boyar Duma. See George Vernadsky, *The Tsardom of Moscow*, 2 vols. (New Haven and London, 1969), 1:155, 174, 184, 188.

40. A. A. Zimin, *Oprichnina Ivana Groznogo* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 463–64.

41. *SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 197.

42. Ibid., no. 198. In these subsurety arrangements the names are usually given three times: first, in the list of men acting as sureties; second, in the statement giving the amount each was to pay; and, frequently, a third time "on the back of the document," in a note stating that the sureties had appeared before the grand prince's officials to secure the release of the principal. Some of the sureties (those who were literate) then signed the document. In the multiple listing process, probably as a result of scribal errors, names may change (e.g., Sulemin/Sulmenov, no. 181; Zlobin/Zabelin, no. 191; Fedor Vnukov syn Volkov became Fedor Volkov syn Vnukov, no. 198) or be omitted entirely in one or two of the listings (e.g., Grigorei Koltovskoy, no. 176; Golianishchov, omitted from the fee list, no. 191). But, what is more important, despite any omissions, changes, or additions in any of the lists of names, the money comes out even.

43. See Veselovsky, *Issledovaniia*, p. 123.

44. M. V. Shakhmatov, *Kompetentsiia ispolnitel'noi vlasti v Moskovskoi Rusi*, 2 vols. (Prague, 1936–37), 1:42, 66, and 2:13, 21, 66.

Sigismund insulting replies that the sovereign had drafted.[45] Apparently other boyars received similar messages and kept the fact to themselves, either because they were willing to desert or they desired to retain the option.[46]

It might be argued that these are all exceptional documents, in the sense that they were exacted during times of political crisis from men whose loyalty was in question. Yet, considering the history of Muscovy during these centuries, when was the realm not in a state of crisis, threatened by internal dissension of various sorts, Tatar invasions, or conflict with Lithuania? The point that should be stressed is that the basic attitude reflected in the political loyalty oaths is not at all exceptional. In attempting to gain total control over their realm, the Muscovite rulers drew upon, developed, and extended the methods that had been used to achieve their dominant position among the other Russian princes. Making their servitors responsible for reporting any potentially dangerous activity aided them in reaching their goal, both by enabling them to head off any plots before they had time to develop and by keeping any other possible centers of political power from arising. Boyars who were kept busy watching each other would find it much harder to unite in opposition to the autocracy. The next step was to extend such responsibility to the entire population—to make political informing a positive civic duty and ensure state security by making all members of society guardians of each other's good conduct.

45. Zimin, *Oprichnina*, pp. 267–84. The letters have been published in *Poslaniia Ivana Groznogo*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and Ia. S. Lur'e (Moscow and Leningrad, 1951), pp. 241–74. It has been suggested that Belsky and Vorotynsky, joined by Vladimir Staritsky, used the occasion to make accusations against Fedorov, attempting to direct any suspicion away from themselves (Zimin, *Oprichnina*, pp. 273–74). Sadikov believes that Fedorov was the head of the conspiracy against Ivan IV. See P. A. Sadikov, *Ocherki po istorii oprichniny* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), pp. 29–32. Previous surety bonds securing Vorotynsky's loyalty provide a link joining the four who informed the tsar: both Belsky and Mstislavsky were named as guarantors for him in 1563 (*SGGD*, vol. 1, no. 173), and Fedorov acted as a surety in 1566 (no. 190). Belsky himself had been placed on surety bond (10,000 rubles) in 1562, after an attempted flight to Lithuania, with a total of 125 sureties and subsureties (nos. 175, 176); he had also given a loyalty oath (no. 177). Archival listings record two other related documents, an oath given by Belsky himself to his sureties and an oath administered to his servitors (Veselovsky, *Issledovaniia*, p. 123; also Zimin, *Oprichnina*, pp. 91–92). The families of these men were also related by ties of marriage. Ivan Dmitrievich Belsky married Maria Vasilievna Shuiskaia. Her mother, the widow of Vasilii Vasilievich Shuisky, was the first wife of Fedor Mikhailovich Mstislavsky, father of Ivan Fedorovich Mstislavsky. Fedor Mikhailovich's second wife was a niece of Prince Mikhail Ivanovich Vorotynsky. Ivan Dmitrievich Belsky was also related to the Cheliadnin family. His father Dmitrii Fedorovich married Marfa, sister of Ivan Ivanovich Cheliadnin. Agrafena, sister of Ivan Fedorovich Ovchina Obolensky, to whom Vasilii III had entrusted the upbringing of his young son Ivan IV, had married a Cheliadnin, and her niece Maria Vasilievna, last representative of the family line, married her distant relative Ivan Petrovich Fedorov. See Veselovsky, *Issledovaniia*, pp. 128–29.

46. Vernadsky, *Tsardom*, 1:114.

From the end of the sixteenth century we find numerous documents containing the texts of oaths of allegiance sworn to the successive rulers of Muscovite Russia. These oaths, written according to a standard formula with the space for a name left blank so that each person could insert his own, were to be administered to the population at large by Muscovite administrative officials. They contain some very familiar provisions, whose antecedents can be traced to the old agreements concluded by the princes. When swearing allegiance to the tsar, upon kissing the cross, his subjects promised to report information and to hand over suspected persons and documents. During the seventeenth century, however, there was a shift of emphasis. Previously men had been required to report anything they knew or heard "for good or for evil" (*o dobre i o likhe*); now the chief concern became "gatherings and conspiracies" (*skop i zagovor*). A precedent for this may be found in the special oath Ivan IV required of his *oprichniki.* Taube and Kruze, two foreign adventurers who served in Ivan's special corps from 1564 to 1571, reported that each *oprichnik,* pledging his faithful service, swore not to remain silent about anything evil he knew, or had heard, or would hear, that was being contemplated by anyone against the sovereign, his realm, his wife, or the young princes.[47]

The repetitive formulae of later loyalty oaths reflect the increasing emphasis on reports about "evil acts." For example, in the oath pledging service to Boris Godunov, dated September 15, 1598, his subjects made numerous promises: they vowed to inform the sovereign, his boyars, or intimates (*blizhnie liudi*) if they knew about anyone who wanted to plot or undertake any acts of sorcery against the ruler; they were to report if they knew about or overheard anyone plotting any evil against the tsar, his wife, or their children, or planning to make use of poison or sorcery against the royal family—if so, they were to seize him and bring him to the sovereign himself, or his boyars or intimates; they were not to conceal such a person by any acts, through any guile; and if they were unable to seize the man, they were to make a report about him to the sovereign or to his boyars, who would then pass on the information. If anyone suggested to them, or began to plot with anyone, to place Tsar Semen Begbulatov or his son or any other person on the Muscovite throne, any subject who knew about it or heard about the scheme from anyone else was to seize that person and bring him to the sovereign. The subject was to report such matters in truth, neither making false accusations against his enemies nor concealing the actions of his friends. He promised to report whatever he saw or heard that would be detrimental to the interests of the tsar and his family. If he knew about any gathering or evil intention against the sover-

47. M. G. Roginsky, "Poslanie Ioganna Taube i Elerta Kruze," *Russkii istoricheskii zhurnal,* vol. 8 (Petrograd, 1922), p. 35.

eign or his family, he was to fight to the death those people who were in that gathering with any evil design.[48] The oath to Fedor Borisovich in 1605 given by "boyars, *okol'nichie*,[49] *dumnye dvoriane*,[50] secretaries, undersecretaries, and all people" contained essentially the same promises, with the addition of "that traitor [*vor*], who is called Prince Dmitrii of Uglich," to the list of those plotters for the throne whose agents were to be seized.[51] The oath of allegiance apparently had little effect, since Fedor ruled for only a few weeks in the spring of 1605 before meeting his death at the hands of disloyal subjects. Muscovites next kissed the cross to the first False Dmitrii and his mother. The text of the oath, written on June 11, 1605, again includes the clause covering knowledge of "gatherings."[52]

We also have the text of a "model oath," written in May 1606, which was circulated by the boyars to all the Russian cities, on the basis of which people of all ranks were to swear loyalty to Tsar Vasilii Shuisky. Once more, subjects pledged that if anyone began to speak to them about any evil against the sovereign, they would not listen to that man or accept any evil potions from him, but, having captured him, would tell the sovereign or his intimates about him; and if they were unable to seize him "by any measures," they would tell the sovereign about that man immediately.[53] In the "model oath" circulated by Tsar Vasilii himself, the wording was somewhat different. The subject was to report whatever evil he saw or heard, or any unseemly (*nepodobnye*) words about the sovereign tsar and his family, to the sovereign's boyars, military commanders, and officials in those towns in which he heard about them. The subject again promised not to make false accusations.[54]

An oath taken by the residents of Kazan in January 1611 to the second False Dmitrii contains a variant of the clause. They promised that if they heard

48. *Akty, sobrannye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditsieiu Imperatorskoi akademii nauk*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1836), vol. 2, no. 10; hereafter cited as *AAE*. The document has numerous references to poison, sorcery, and "gatherings and conspiracies" (*skop i zagovor*).

49. The *okol'nichie* held second place in the hierarchy of the Muscovite service aristocracy, ranking immediately below the boyars.

50. The *dumnye dvoriane* were members of the *dvoriane* (court servitors) class who had been appointed members of the Boyar Duma, in which they ranked third after the boyars and *okol'nichie*. For brief definitions of the various ranks in the Muscovite service aristocracy see Hellie, *Readings for Introduction to Russian Civilization*, pp. 216–17.

51. *SGGD*, vol. 2, no. 85.

52. Ibid., no. 91.

53. Ibid., no. 143.

54. Ibid., no. 145. A letter sent by Vasilii to Perm Velikaia, announcing his accession to the throne, had two oaths appended: one his own to the Russian people, and the other the formula circulated by the boyars (*AAE*, vol. 2, no. 44).

any evil counsel from anyone, or heard about gatherings and conspiracies, they would seize that man and place him before the boyars, military governors, and secretaries, and they would stand collectively (*vsem s odnogo*) against that evil man.[55]

In the oath of allegiance taken to the newly elected tsar of Russia, Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov, in February 1613 the obligation to report all antigovernment activities was extended to the entire population. We have the text of the oath circulated by the Moscow national assembly (Zemsky Sovet)[56] to all the Russian towns, for administration to people of all ranks. All these men vowed that if they knew or heard about a gathering, or a conspiracy, or any other evil design, among any people, against their Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Rus', they would fight those people on behalf of the tsar, and if they were able to subdue and capture them, they would bring them to the sovereign; but if they were unable to seize those people by any measures, they would tell the sovereign or his boyars and intimates about that conspiracy and gathering.[57] The oath sworn in 1645 to the next tsar, Aleksei Mikhailovich, in essence repeated those clauses concerning the obligation to report that had appeared in the oath sworn to his father in 1613.[58]

The promise to report disloyalty had certainly become a standard part of any Russian oath of allegiance. We even find it, along with the other customary formulae, in the oath sworn to King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden by the citizens of Novgorod in 1615.[59] The oath to Tsar Mikhail administered in 1627

55. *SGGD*, vol. 2, no. 225 (also published in *AAE*, vol. 2, no. 170).

56. *Zemskii sovet* or *sovet vseia zemli* is the term used in seventeenth-century documents for the land or national assembly. The name Zemsky Sobor "is merely a convenient invention by later historians"; see J. L. H. Keep, "The Decline of the Zemsky Sobor," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 36, no. 86 (December 1957): 102.

57. *SGGD*, vol. 3, no. 5. The oath taken by residents of Beloozero in 1613 included somewhat different arrangements for handing over suspected traitors. If they heard from anyone about an evil deed or intention or correspondence (*ssylka*) with a foreign realm, they were not to conceal such a person, but to seize him and bring him to the boyars and military governors and officials in the towns, and, in the townships and villages, to the district elders and "best men." If it was beyond their strength to seize him, they were to inform the same officials against such a person, reporting such evil intentions and correspondence in truth, and they were not to make false accusations against anyone from enmity, nor cover anyone out of friendship. Specific clauses forbade communication with Marina Mniszek and her allies. A very general provision toward the end of the oath covers any "evil acts," including attempted poisoning, any plots whatsoever, or any dealings with foreign or internal enemies—all such matters were to be reported faithfully to the government officials. See *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim*, 12 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1846–75), vol. 2, no. 1.

58. *SGGD*, vol. 3, no. 123. These provisions were repeated in an oath sworn by soldiers in 1649 (*Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim*, vol. 3, no. 65).

59. *Dopolneniia k aktam istoricheskim*, vol. 2, no. 44.

to boyars, *okol'nichie, dumnye* people, *stol'niki,*[60] *striapchie,*[61] and people of all ranks again incorporated the promise to report anything known or overheard about evil deeds, conspiracies, plots, and intentions, to seize any such people, or to report any "gatherings and conspiracies" if unable to apprehend the suspects.[62] An abbreviated form is found in an oath sworn by the Don Cossacks in 1632, after they had acknowledged their guilt in not listening to the tsar's decree and proceeding with military action against the Turks.[63] Foreigners who came to Russia in "eternal service" to Mikhail swore to report, and capture if possible, anyone who did not serve the sovereign and carry out his orders, or who undertook to betray him, or anyone they saw or heard about who had evil intentions against the sovereign.[64] In 1633 Altyn-Tsar (or Altan-Khan, Mongol ruler of the Uriankhai regions), his brothers, relatives, and his entire Horde vowed that if they knew about any betrayal of the sovereign, they would declare those traitors to the tsar and write to the military governors and secretaries in Tomsk about the matter.[65]

In their oath to Tsar Aleksei in 1648 his subjects of the Moslem faith promised to report anything plotted against the Russian people, conspiracies, or evil intentions, or the approach of armed men against the sovereign's towns, to the sovereign's military governors or officials in the towns, or to send messengers with the information. They also agreed to report anyone not serving the sovereign, or undertaking any dealings with his enemies, the Tatars and Khan Kuchum's grandson Devlet-Girei, his brothers and their relatives.[66]

60. *Stol'niki* were members of the fourth court rank—a term corresponding to "pantler" (*panetier*). Alexandre Eck, *Le moyen âge russe* (Paris, 1933), p. 582.

61. *Striapchie* were members of the fifth court rank—a term corresponding to "varlet." Ibid., p. 582.

62. *Akty moskovskago gosudarstva*, ed. N. A. Popov, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1890–1901), vol. 1, no. 198; hereafter cited as *AMG*.

63. Ibid., no. 469.

64. Oath of 1632 (ibid., no. 470). They even agreed to petition the sovereign before writing to friends and relatives in foreign lands. It should be pointed out that these people swore upon the Gospel, after the Western manner, rather than kissing the cross.

65. I. P. Kuznetsov, *Istoricheskie akty XVII stoletiia*, 2 vols. (Tomsk, 1890–97), vol. 1, no. 1. Altyn and his Horde swore after the Moslem custom, "daiu shert'," rather than the Russian "tseluiu krest."

66. *SGGD*, vol. 3, no. 131. In 1651 the princes of the Nogai Horde agreed to report all differences that arose among them to the sovereign and his officials in the kingdom of Astrakhan, and to await the tsar's decree in the matter (ibid., no. 145). They promised to report any betrayal which they knew about to the Astrakhan officials either in writing, by going themselves and conferring with them about the sovereign's matters, or by notifying them through their own trusted men. They agreed to hand over any documents or messengers from the Turks, from Azov, or from any other Tatar group, urging them to break faith with the tsar and undertake something to his detriment. The messengers and documents were to be sent to the tsar's officials in Astrakhan or in the other towns, whichever was closer. We also find the promises to report any conspiracies or other evil intentions which they knew or heard about, to apprehend and turn in the culprits or

Despite the number of oaths administered during the first half of the seventeenth century, one might question how seriously the Muscovite government viewed the matter and how strictly it attempted to enforce the promises made by its subjects. A number of documents relating to the ascension to the throne of Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1645 suggest that the oath of allegiance was considered very important indeed. Prince Aleksei Trubetskoy, for example, was sent to Tula, where he was to go to the cathedral, announce the death of Tsar Mikhail and the succession of Aleksei, and, in the presence of the religious authorities, administer the oath to the military governors, all state and military servitors, officials both Muscovite and local, all members of the nobility of whatever rank in the area, the local population, Cossacks, and foreigners. Foreigners and Tatars were to swear according to their own faith.[67] The tsar's German servitors in Tula complained that they had no Lutheran pastor and no German Gospel upon which to swear, and without them they could not take the oath. The *murzy* and other Tatars told Trubetskoy that they could not swear the oath without the Koran and a translator, both of which were lacking in Tula. Trubetskoy reported all this to the tsar. A note at the end of his letter records that the sovereign, having listened to this report, ordered that a Lutheran pastor and Gospel be dispatched to Tula for the Germans, along with a copy of the Koran and a translator from the Posolsky Prikaz for the Tatars. He decreed that a memorandum be sent to the Prikaz immediately, so that the pastor, translator, and religious books could be sent to Tula posthaste.[68]

Prince Ivan Lykov, sent to administer the oath to the Mtsensk military governor Vasilii Sheremetev, reported that Sheremetev had refused to come to the cathedral with his people as ordered. Instead, Sheremetev had sent a message, declaring that the oath to Aleksei had already been given. But, Lykov reported, whether Vasilii and his people had taken the oath and according to what formula was unknown to him. Sheremetev in turn wrote to the tsar, explaining that he had already carried out administration of the oath before the sovereign's emissary had arrived, and had sent a record of it to Moscow. The outcome of all this was that Sheremetev and the people of Mtsensk had to repeat the procedure, taking the oath for a second time in the presence of Ivan Lykov.[69]

---

notify officials about them if unable to catch them, to report any correspondence in matters against the terms of the oath, and to refrain from false accusations against enemies or protection of friends, in an oath to be administered in 1652 to new members of the petty gentry in various towns and newly baptized Tatars. See *AMG*, vol. 2, no. 497.

67. *AMG*, vol. 2, nos. 246 and 247.

68. Ibid., no. 248. For an account of the administration of the oath in Odoev, including the one administered to Tatars, see no. 252.

69. Ibid., no. 249. Another of the tsar's agents reported that he was unable to visit the remaining cities on his list to administer the oath, since illness had overtaken him on

The tsar's officials in Pereiaslavl-Riazansky encountered other difficulties. As the others were repeating the oath in the cathedral, a certain member of the petty gentry, Dementii Gololobov, would not read his copy and whispered some unintelligible words.[70] The officials questioned him, then ordered him to read the oath alone. He pronounced a few words but left many others out, so they sent him to prison. The tsar's officials then questioned the other men present, including Gololobov's brother, in the presence of the archimandrite and archpriest, to find out whether he had spoken clearly in the past or if he was ill. Those who were questioned declared that until that hour he had spoken well. They also said that he had been involved in many lawsuits and had appeared in court on his own behalf; his current behavior was a matter of his own treachery (*vorovstvo*). The prisoner was then brought to the cathedral again. This time he read the oath clearly, and since he had done so, they led him to the cross. But for his treachery in not reading the oath twice they ordered him to be kept in prison "until thy sovereign decrees [arrives]." A note at the end of the document records that Gololobov was to be held in prison until the forty days of mourning for the "sovereign of blessed memory" had passed, and then he was to be sent to Moscow.[71]

Thus the Muscovite authorities apparently took the matter of the oath very seriously. The same was true regarding the obligation to report all information concerning disloyalty. In 1621 the military governor in Putivl reported rumors, probably passed on to him by loyal citizens, that a former resident of the area, a certain "traitor" named Ivashka Korensky, had been seen on the road to Moscow and allegedly had gone there to spy on behalf of another traitor to the sovereign. Korensky was brought in for questioning, and the examination reveals the kind of attitude that prevailed in Moscow at that time. The tsar's officials wanted to know what Korensky had done while living in Putivl. How long ago had he fled to Novgorod-Seversky? Who had sent him there and with what documents or messages or mission? Had he had a letter or a verbal command, and about what and from whom precisely? Having arrived there, how long and with whom had he lived? Had it been with Ovdokim Vitoftov (another alleged traitor)? What had Ovdokim asked him? How long ago had he left Novgorod, and with whom had he come? Had he reported to the military governors when he returned to Putivl? Did he have a letter from them to the sovereign? With whom had he traveled from Putivl,

---

the road and he was lying near death; the concluding notes record the measures taken for completion of the oath-giving procedure by one of his relatives (ibid., no. 254).

70. During the oath-taking ceremony, the man giving his pledge had to pronounce each word distinctly, not omitting a single one, and then kiss the cross (Veselovsky, *Issledovaniia*, p. 99).

71. *AMG*, vol. 2, no. 250.

and to what towns? After arriving in Moscow, to what chancellery had he reported?[72]

Another investigation, conducted in the same year, developed when a leader of the Cossacks and arquebusiers (*strel'tsy*) in Lebediansk came to the military governor and made charges against one of his Cossacks, alleging that one day, when he had been beating the Cossack, the man had exclaimed, "Have mercy, for the sake of our sovereign, Tsar Dmitrii!" The ruling sovereign's name, of course, was Mikhail. When the Cossack denied the charges, an investigation was to be conducted to discover if anyone had overheard the exchange.[73]

Men continued to report on each other, and the authorities carefully examined all charges. The military governor of Belogorod, for example, notified Moscow that a traitor had been captured. Two local vagrants (*guliashchie liudi*) had brought in a third, who the year before had gone to Lithuania with the Don Cossacks. After questioning the suspect, the governor placed him in prison and sent his testimony to Moscow. The fact that the man had been captured by Belogorod residents does show that they fulfilled their obligation.[74]

In 1653 the Volokolamsk military governor reported that a Volok Cossack had brought in an unknown person. The suspect had described his far-flung travels throughout the land, and the military governor felt that without the sovereign's decree he dared not release the man, because he had given incorrect information about the cities he had visited. The concluding notation recorded that the man was to be sent to Moscow.[75] His incorrect information, and the mere fact that he had been moving around the country so much, somehow seemed suspicious.

72. Korensky's testimony comprises a long recital of his misfortunes, his being deprived illegally, he claimed, of his property, his wanderings in an attempt to escape those who wanted to murder him, and his struggles to regain his land through petitions to the authorities. The remarks at the end of the record indicate that on July 1, 1621, the sovereign ordered, after discussing the problem with the boyars, that the muzhik be tortured for spying. There is no record of his testimony under torture; it was finally decreed that for his treason he be sent to Siberia. See *AMG*, vol. 1, no. 137.

73. Ibid., no. 139.

74. Ibid., no. 152.

75. Ibid., vol. 2, no. 560. Another investigation arose from a drunken servant's declaration that his master had said that Tsar Aleksei had become tsar not through their choice. The master was exonerated after questioning. On December 18, 1645, the sovereign decreed that the lying servant be beaten, and that the master, if he had not already done so, be brought to the cross to take the oath of allegiance (ibid., no. 264). As a final illustration, there is the case of the Pskov resident Grishka Triasisolomin, who had been accused of using unseemly words (*nepristoinyia rechi*) about the wife of Aleksei Mikhailovich, and had confessed under torture. He was to be punished by having his tongue cut out, after which he and his family were to be sent to Novgorod under guard. See *AAE*, vol. 4, no. 50.

Punishment after the fact was not the only method used by the Muscovite government in its campaign against traitors. "Positive"—in the sense of preventive—measures were also developed more extensively to encourage citizens in the performance of their civic duty to inform on each other. The device of using sureties to ensure good conduct, which had been applied earlier in connection with the political loyalty oaths, was extended to all levels of society. The institution of collective responsibility was, of course, far from being a new thing. It had been known even in Kievan Russia, where communal suretyship was used in fiscal, service, and criminal responsibility. Moscow extended the system: Russians of all social levels, from great boyars and princes to lowly serfs, were bound by some form of suretyship.[76] Military servitors and administrative officials had groups of sureties who guaranteed that they would perform their duties loyally. Residents in the border regions, peasants and landholders, were all bound to be on the lookout for "traitors" attempting to enter or leave the country.[77] Muscovite townsmen and peasants were obligated to watch for murderers, brigands, thieves, and "evil men" in general.

In the seventeenth century, all subjects of the tsar were bound by their oath of allegiance to report anyone plotting against the sovereign. Otherworldly penalties were still attached to violation of the oath, but—as had happened earlier—they were not considered strong enough to ensure loyalty. The citizen's desire to carry out his obligations was reinforced by fear, and the penalty for failure to inform the authorities of disloyal intentions or acts of fellow citizens was spelled out clearly in law. The *Sobornoe ulozhenie* of 1649, the new law code compiled under Aleksei Mikhailovich, repeated the wording found in the oaths of allegiance to Aleksei and his father, thus declaring the legal responsibility of every subject of the tsar: "And whoever, people of all ranks of the Muscovite realm, knows or hears about a conspiracy and gathering or any other evil design against the tsarist majesty among any people, they shall notify the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Rus', or his sovereign boyars and intimates, or the military governors and officials in the towns, about that."[78] But this time the abstract, moral statement of duty

76. For a discussion of the institution of collective responsibility in medieval Russia see H. W. Dewey and A. M. Kleimola, "Suretyship and Collective Responsibility in pre-Petrine Russia," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, n.s., 18, no. 3 (September 1970): 337–54.

77. G. Kotoshikhin, *O Rossii v tsarstvovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*, 4th ed. (St. Petersburg, 1906), p. 53; S. P. Nikonov, *Poruchitel'stvo v ego istoricheskom razvitii po russkomu pravu* (St. Petersburg, 1895), pp. 34–39; Shakhmatov, *Kompetentsiia*, 1:21, 42–44, 2:3–4.

78. *Sobornoe ulozhenie*, chap. 2, art. 18. For texts of the *Ulozhenie* see M. N. Tikhomirov and P. P. Epifanov, eds., *Sobornoe ulozhenie 1649 goda* (Moscow, 1961), and *Pamiatniki russkogo prava*, vol. 6: *Sobornoe ulozhenie tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha 1649 goda*, ed. K. A. Sofronenko (Moscow, 1957). Such responsibility was later extended

was buttressed by an explicit, concrete provision regarding its violation. People of all classes were subject to the same penalty for failure to inform against each other in such matters: "And if anyone, knowing or hearing about a conspiracy or gathering among any people, or any other evil intention, does not inform the sovereign and his sovereign boyars and intimates, and military governors and officials in the towns, about that, and it becomes known to the sovereign that he knew about such a matter and did not report, the matter shall be thoroughly investigated, and he shall be punished for that with death, without any mercy."[79]

Thus by the middle of the seventeenth century Muscovites of whatever rank and standing were bound in law to serve as political informers against each other, to report whatever they knew or heard about disloyal acts, or even thoughts, of their fellow citizens—to spy or to die. In effect the provisions of the *Ulozhenie* marked the complete extension to the entire realm of the concept of collective responsibility in the political sphere, making each man accountable for the conduct of his fellows and requiring that he pay with his life for failure to carry out his obligations. Yet the decree of the *Ulozhenie* only served to provide a comprehensive statement of an attitude that had been basic in the Muscovite outlook for centuries, namely, that the best way to ensure the security of the realm was through the closest possible supervision of each man's thoughts and actions—the more people involved in keeping watch, the better.

---

to cover not only crimes against the state but all other varieties as well (*Pamiatniki russkogo prava*, vol. 6, p. 35).

79. *Sobornoe ulozhenie*, chap. 2, art. 19. These provisions were reflected, for example, in the procedure used when a new recruit entered the ranks of Cossacks serving the Muscovite tsar. In one instance a baptized Kalmyk had petitioned Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1665, asking to enter his service and declaring that other members of his family were already performing military duties in Tomsk. The tsar ordered that he be allowed to join the ranks in Tomsk. He was to take the oath, and at the same time a surety bond was to be written for him, guaranteeing faithful service and no dealings with traitors. The guarantors, his uncles and brothers serving in Tomsk, were to be ordered to watch him carefully, so that he would not betray the ruler or depart without their knowledge. If his guarantors heard of any disloyal acts, they were to inform against him. For such service they would receive rewards, and the traitor would be executed. If, on the other hand, they possessed such information and did not report it and he betrayed his oath and left without knowledge, and it was revealed that they had known and not told, then their reward would be death. See Kuznetsov, *Istoricheskie akty*, vol. 1, no. 9.